

## EPA Recognizes Seven Communities for Smart Growth Achievement

Written by Press  
Release

Category:  
Environmental

[Tweet](#)

WASHINGTON--(ENEWSPP)--February 4, 2014. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today recognized projects in seven communities as winners of the 2013 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement for their creative, sustainable initiatives that better protect the health and the environment while strengthening local economies. Among the winners are an expansive greenway in Atlanta, a downtown whitewater rafting park in rural Iowa, and a regional development plan for metropolitan Chicago. Other winners include the revitalized Historic Millwork District in Dubuque and an innovative, affordable infill housing development near public transit in Sacramento.

"The winning projects show us that we can develop, grow local economies, and protect public health and the environment all at the same time," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "These projects also act as models for others, so they too can chart their own path toward healthier, more sustainable communities."

The 2013 award winners were judged in five categories: overall excellence; corridor or neighborhood revitalization; plazas, parks, and public places; policies, programs, and plans; and built projects. Specific initiatives include cleaning up and reusing brownfields; using green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff and improve water quality; providing transportation options; and providing green, energy-efficient housing in low-income areas.

The 2013 winners are:

### **Overall Excellence – Winner**

#### **Atlanta Beltline Eastside Trail/Historic Fourth Ward Park, Atlanta BeltLine, Inc., Atlanta, Ga.**

The Atlanta BeltLine is comprised of four individual "belt lines" that were built as railroad bypass routes around downtown Atlanta in the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The 2.25-mile Eastside Trail is the first section of the Atlanta BeltLine trail system to be redeveloped within the abandoned rail corridor. The trail connects five formerly divided neighborhoods by providing 30 acres of greenway, a pedestrian and bicycle trail, and an arboretum. The Eastside Trail connects to Historic Fourth Ward Park, a cleaned-up brownfield that is now a 17-acre park with a lake to handle stormwater runoff. The trail and park have spurred more than \$775 million in private development, including more than 1,000 new mixed-income condominiums and apartments currently under construction.

### **Corridor or Neighborhood Revitalization – Winner**

#### **Historic Millwork District and Washington Neighborhood, Dubuque, Iowa**

Once a bustling center of regional economic activity, Dubuque's Millwork District sat vacant for decades after it fell victim to the economic shifts that touched much of the Midwest in the mid-1900s. The adjacent Washington Neighborhood was affected by the Millwork District's decline, facing disinvestment and neglect when the mills began to shutter their doors and residents moved away from downtown. Today, thanks to strong community partnerships, public engagement, and an overarching citywide commitment to sustainability, Dubuque is successfully restoring both the Millwork District and Washington Neighborhood to the vibrant neighborhoods they once were.

### **Plazas, Parks, and Public Places – Winner**

#### **Charles City Riverfront Park, Charles City, Iowa**

After years of fighting against the often-flooded Cedar River, Charles City used land acquired through Federal Emergency Management Agency flood buyouts to create an inviting riverfront park with a whitewater course. Capitalizing on the river's natural features to help prevent future flooding, Charles City turned the river from an obstacle into an ecological and social benefit. Members of the community were involved in the park's design and construction. Riverfront Park is a model of how to strategically use flooded properties to create a sustainable and economically valuable amenity.

### **Policies, Programs, and Plans – Winner**

#### **GO TO 2040, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Metropolitan Chicago, Ill.**

GO TO 2040 is a policy-based regional plan and metropolitan Chicago's first comprehensive plan since 1909. Developed by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, GO TO 2040 aims to help the region's municipalities and counties cope with common challenges and build a sustainable, prosperous future. GO TO 2040 envisions a region where residents have more housing and transportation options; parks and open space; jobs closer to home; cleaner air and water; and a better quality of life.

### **Built Projects – Winner**

#### **La Valentina, Sacramento, Calif.**

Lying vacant for over 20 years, the area surrounding the Alkali Flat/La Valentina light-rail station in downtown Sacramento was known for crime, blight, and contamination. In 2007, a public-private partnership between the city of Sacramento and Domus Development brought together community groups to address neighborhood concerns and create a new vision for the area. From that vision came an affordable, mixed-use building complex—La Valentina and La Valentina North—that has cutting-edge energy-efficient features and is located next to a light-rail stop.

#### **Policies, Programs, and Plans – Honorable Mention**

##### **Lower Eastside Action Plan, Detroit City Planning Commission, Detroit, Mich.**

By 2010, Detroit's once-vibrant Lower Eastside Neighborhood had the largest number of vacancies in the city. A group of local community development organizations helped residents with planning to start making positive change. They created the Lower Eastside Action Plan and planning process designed to engage residents in making decisions on their neighborhood's future, stabilizing the thriving areas still left, and transforming vacant properties to improve quality of life.

#### **Built Projects – Honorable Mention**

##### **Via Verde, New York City Department of Housing Preservation, The Bronx, N.Y.**

Via Verde, a LEED Gold, mixed-income housing development in the Bronx, sets a new standard for how design and energy efficiency can help improve residents' health and create a sense of community. The project is a partnership between the New York Department of Housing Preservation and Development and private and nonprofit developers, and it sits on a cleaned-up former rail yard in a low-income neighborhood. Via Verde's location near subway and bus lines, plus innovative design and attention to residents' needs, offer a model for other developments.

EPA received 77 award applications from 31 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. The winners were chosen based on their effectiveness in creating sustainable communities; fostering equitable development among public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders; and serving as national models for environmentally and economically sustainable development.

EPA created the National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in 2002 to highlight exceptional approaches to development that protect the environment, encourage economic vitality, and enhance quality of life. In the past 12 years, 61 winners from 26 states have shown a variety of approaches that states, regions, cities, suburbs, and rural communities can use to create economically strong, environmentally responsible development. EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities manages the awards program.

EPA will host a ceremony on February 5 to recognize the winners.

More information on the winners, including videos: <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/awards.htm>

Source: epa.gov

[Tweet](#)

